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Sixty-first session

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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 29 September 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Yousfi ..... (Algeria)
Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Abraszewski

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Election of officers for the sixty-first session of the General Assembly

1. **The Chairman**, recalling that the Committee, in accordance with paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 58/126, had elected its officers on 7 July 2006, at its 67th meeting of the sixtieth session, and had decided to elect a Vice-Chairman from the Group of Asian States at a subsequent meeting, said that that regional group had nominated and endorsed Mr. Ram Babu Dhakal (Nepal) for the post of Vice-Chairman. He took it that the Committee wished to elect Mr. Dhakal Vice-Chairman.

2. *Mr. Dhakal (Nepal) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.*

Organization of work (A/C.5/61/1; A/C.5/61/L.1)

3. **The Chairman** invited members to consider the proposed programme of work of the Committee for the main part of the session, as set forth in the informal paper circulated to delegations. The proposed programme of work had been prepared on the basis of the list of agenda items allocated to the Committee by the General Assembly, which was contained in document A/C.5/61/1. The status of preparedness of the relevant documentation for those items was described in document A/C.5/61/L.1. A revised list of documents would be issued shortly under the symbol A/C.5/61/L.1/Rev.1.

4. He wished to highlight some of the recommendations made by the General Committee in document A/61/250, which the Assembly had adopted at its 2nd meeting. The Fifth Committee should, inter alia, complete its work for the main part of the session by 8 December 2006. Meetings of the Main Committees, including informal meetings, should start promptly at 10 a.m. and be adjourned by 6 p.m. The General Assembly had also decided, in accordance with past practice, to waive the requirement that at least one quarter of the members of a Main Committee should be present in order to declare a meeting open and to permit the debate to proceed.

5. Efforts should be made to reduce the number and the length of resolutions adopted; resolutions should not request reports from the Secretary-General unless they were necessary to facilitate implementation of those resolutions or to keep an item under examination. In addition, the Main Committees should merely take note of the reports of the Secretary-General or of subsidiary organs which did not require a decision by the Assembly. Regarding documentation, the Assembly had requested Member States to exercise restraint in making requests for new reports and to opt for integrated reports instead.

6. Turning to questions related to the programme budget, he drew attention to rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, regarding statements of programme budget implications. He recalled that, in paragraphs 12 and 13 of its decision 34/401, the Assembly had urged each Main Committee to allow sufficient time for the Secretariat to prepare estimates of expenditures arising from draft resolutions and for the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee to consider such estimates. The Assembly had decided that a mandatory deadline (not later than 1 December) should be established for the submission to the Fifth Committee of all draft resolutions with financial implications. The Fifth Committee should, as a general practice, consider accepting without debate the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the financial implications of draft resolutions up to a limit of $25,000 on any one item. A minimum of 48 hours should be allowed between the submission and the voting of a proposal involving expenditure in order to allow the Secretary-General to prepare and present the related statement of administrative and financial implications.

7. **Ms. Pehrman** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Serbia, and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that a number of the issues contained in the Committee's programme of work were vital to improving transparency, accountability and internal controls in the Organization, which could only become stronger and more effective through better management and accountability.

8. With the activities of the Committee at the current session focused on human resources matters, it must be remembered that the United Nations required an integrated and mobile global workforce, as it had

90,000 personnel serving in 18 peacekeeping missions on four continents. The Committee must discuss the Secretary-General's human resources proposals with that need in mind. It must also return urgently to the capital master plan for renovation of the Headquarters complex, a matter which had been on its agenda for far too long, to ensure the safety and security of staff, visitors and national delegates. The European Union reiterated its support for strategy IV (see A/C.5/60/SR.51, para. 10), and stressed that agreement on funding the capital master plan must be reached by the end of the main part of the current session.

9. The European Union took the view that the Committee must give priority to time-bound agenda items, such as the proposed strategic framework and budget outline for the following biennium. It was confident that the Committee could complete its work on time and without the need for meetings outside normal working hours, and in that connection endorsed the General Committee recommendations to which the Chairman had referred.

10. **Mr. Rashkow** (United States of America) said that, at the 2005 World Summit, the heads of State and Government of the Organization's Member States had committed themselves to making the United Nations more effective, efficient, transparent and accountable. While initial progress had been made in turning the Organization into an institution fully able to address the complex challenges facing the international community, much remained to be done, particularly with regard to internal oversight, cost savings and ensuring that resources were used for their intended purpose. The Committee's consideration of issues such as oversight, human resources management and procurement at the current session had the potential to produce a lasting improvement in the operation of the Organization. A strengthened and improved United Nations which more effectively fulfilled the mandates in its Charter was in the interest of all States. The Member States should therefore work closely to achieve that aim.

11. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the sixtieth session of the General Assembly has shown that, by respecting the existing mechanisms for negotiation and the sovereign right of every Member State to express its view on administrative and budgetary matters, the Committee could adopt decisions that were in the interest of the Organization. The Group was encouraged that other delegations shared its willingness to build on the existing positive atmosphere.

12. As the workload of the Committee was heavier with every session, it was essential for the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee to ensure that Member States received reports well before they were scheduled for discussion. Despite some improvement in the situation, Member States' ability to consider reports and prepare for negotiations was being undermined by continued late issuance of documents. As a result, it was the issuance of reports that was determining Member States' priorities and therefore the programme of work of the Committee. That should not be the case: the Committee's programme of work should be determined by the importance which the Member States attached to an item, not by the date on which the relevant reports became available.

13. At the current session, the Committee would be considering many items which were essential to the effective functioning of the Organization, including the budgets of peacekeeping missions and special political missions, the performance reports of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, issues relating to the regular budget, the scale of assessments for the following biennium and the financing of the capital master plan. The Group of 77 and China stood ready to consider and conclude work on those matters, but cautioned against a preoccupation with items that were regarded as time-bound, at the expense of other important items that were important to the functioning of the Organization even though they were not budget-related.

14. **Mr. Kirn** (Slovenia), speaking on behalf of the six successor States in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and associating them with the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union, said that the successor States firmly believed that the issue of the unpaid assessments of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, already deferred from the sixtieth session, should be resolved at the current session. However, the report of the Secretary-General on the unpaid assessed contributions of the former Yugoslavia (A/60/140) remained unacceptable. Having engaged in expert-level consultations with the Secretariat to determine the exact level of unpaid contributions, and having reached findings and conclusions which brought a solution

closer, the successor States had expected a revised report to be issued, in line with their previous request (see A/C.5/60/SR.37, para. 12). As the report had been submitted in its original form for consideration by the Committee at the current session, the six States would present their views and proposed solution in writing, for circulation as an official document to be considered when the relevant agenda item was discussed.

15. **Mr. Torrington** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, expressed confidence that the members of the Committee would progress towards their shared objectives, and that the recommendations of the General Committee would serve as a basis to complete the Committee's substantial volume of work expeditiously.

16. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to approve the proposed programme of work on the understanding that the Bureau would take into account the views expressed and make the necessary adjustments.

17. *It was so decided.*

18. **The Chairman** suggested that a deadline of 18 October 2006 should be set for the submission of candidatures for appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments.

19. **Mr. Abelian** (Secretary of the Committee) reminded the Committee that, to allow time for processing, the names of candidates should be communicated to the Secretariat in an appropriate note verbale, accompanied by a curriculum vitae, as rapidly as possible. If the candidature was put forward by a group, it should fall to the chairperson of that group to ensure that the relevant documents reached the Secretariat in time.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.